

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 121543Z FEB 76

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5994

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 962

EO 11652: XGDS-4

TAG: ELAB, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF LABOR ON POLITICAL SITUATION

REFS: (A) LISBON 0964 (DTG 121545Z FEB 76)

(B) LISBON 359 (DTG 161659Z JAN 76)

SUMMARY: THIS IS PART ONE OF A TWO PART MESSAGE, REFERENCE (A) DEALING WITH THE MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON LABOR MATTERS. MINISTER PREDICTED A SOCIALIST AND POPULAR DEMOCRATIC VICTORY IN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS TO BE HELD APRIL 25 AND COMMENTED ON POLITICAL DYNAMIS WITHIN THESE GROUPS AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTER OF LABOR TOMAS ROSA MET WITH LABATT FEB 11.

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MINISTER WAS SELF-CONFIDENT AND MODERATELY OPTIMISTIC.

FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES MAJOR POINTS OF CONVERSATION.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: MINISTER ASSERTED THAT IN HIS VIEW PORTUGAL IS IRREVERSIBLY ON THE ROAD TOWARD DEMOCRACY. NEITHER THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) AND THE EXTREME LEFT NOR THE EXTREME RIGHT CURRENTLY HAVE THE ABILITY TO PULL A SUCCESSFUL COUP. HE IS CONVINCED THAT AN ATTEMPT BY EITHER SIDE WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE DEFEATED BY A COUNTER-COUP.

3. ELECTORAL PROSPECTS: THE MINISTER STATED THAT ELECTORAL LAW SIGNED FEB 10 PROVIDES THAT ELECTIONS SHALL BE HELD NO LATER THAN APRIL 26, THUS CONFIRMING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THEY WILL AGAIN BE HELD ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION, APRIL 25. HE ANTICIPATES THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) WILL POLL 30 PER CENT OR BETTER BUT LESS THAN THE 38 PER CENT IT WON IN 1975. THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS (PPD) SHOULD ALSO DRAW 30 PERCENT, VERY CLOSE TO THE PS. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER PARTY (CDS) SHOULD POLL BETTER THAN 20 PER CENT. THE PCP WILL THUS BE COMPETING WITH OTHER LEFTIST GROUPS FOR THE REMAINDER AND WILL POLL FEWER VOTES THAN IN 1975. EFFORTS BY LEFTIST GROUPS SUCH AS THE MES AND THE MDP/CDE WILL DETRACT MORE FROM PCP STRENGTH THAN FROM THE SOCIALISTS.

4. PPD STRATEGY: MAGALHAES MOTA OF THE PPD TOLD ROSA ON FEB 10 THAT PPD WAS CONCERNED OVER MARIO SAORES'S INITIATIVE TO DELAY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS FOR UP TO SIX MONTHS AFTER LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THE PPD FEARED THAT SUCH A MOVE WOULD CAUSE PRIME MINISTER PINHEIRO DE AZEVEDO TO BE FORGOTTEN BY PUBLIC DURING THE SIX MONTH PERIOD BETWEEN ELECTIONS WHEN HE WOULD BE OUT OF OFFICE. (ROSA SAID THAT FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES, FOR HIS OWN REASONS, ALSO IS WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES AGAINST PINHEIRO DE AZEVEDO'S CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY.) AS A COUNTER TO SAORES'S CALL FOR DELAYED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, THE PPD ISSUED A STATEMENT URGING SIMULTANEOUS OR CLOSELY LINKED PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. ROSA NOTED THAT PPD IS MAKING SURPRISING PROGRESS. FOR EXAMPLE, PPD STUDENTS ARE WINNING ELECTIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PCP STRONGHOLDS OF SETUBAL AND BARREIRO.

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5. SOCIALIST PARTY DYNAMICS: ROSA SAID HE WAS TOLD BY LEADING SOCIALISTS THAT SAORES'S CALL FOR DELAYED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WAS CONTRARY TO A DECISION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARIAT. ROSA SPECULATED THAT EITHER THERE IS A DEAL BETWEEN PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES AND SAORES, OR ELSE SAORES IS UP TO SOME POLITICAL MANEUVER. IN ANY CASE, SAORES IS ACTING MORE AS A "FOREIGN MINISTER" FOR

THE SOCIALIST PARTY, CONSTANTLY TRAVELING ABROAD TO THE
DETRIMENT OF THE PARTY'S INTERNAL ORGNIZATION.

6. ROSA SAID HE HAD ATTENDED BY INVITATION A SESSION
OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARIAT. HE WAS NOT IMPRESSED
BY WHAT HE SAW. THE MEETING WAS PRESIDED OVER BY SALGADO
ZENHA WHO IN ROSA'S VIEW IS A WELL BALANCED LEADER
ATTENTIVE TO THE DETAILS OF PARTY ADMINISTRATION. (HE
THOUGHT IT NOT UNLIKELY THAT SOARES MAY BECOME PRESIDENT
OF PARTY AND SALGADO ZENHA MOVE UP TO SECRETARY GENERAL.)
THE SECRETARIAT INCLUDED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHOM ROSA
CONSIDERED TOO YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED TO BE INVOLVED
"IN SOMETING AS SERIOUS AS POLITICS." HE SAID HE WAS
NOT SURPRISED THAT RADICAL LANGUAGE SOMETIMES IS APPROVED
BY THE PS SECRETARIAT.

7. ROSA SAID THAT PS HAS TWO WINGS, ONE MADE UP OF
RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE TYPIFIED BY SOARES AND ZENHA. THE
LEFT WING IS MADE UP OF TWO SEPARATE GROUPS OF INDIVIDUALS.
ONE GROUP INCLUDES THE FORMER EXILES AND ACTIVISTS
WHO ARE STILL EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED IN THE "STRUGGLE AGAINST
FASCISM." THE OTHER GROUP IS COMPOSED OF "PARLOR
LEFTISTS" WHOSE VOCALLY PROCLAIMED LEFTIST ORIENTATION
IS NOT MATCHED BY THEIR PRAGMATIC BEHAVIOR. TYPICAL OF
THIS GROUP IS SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LABOR MARCELO CURTO,
WHO ROSA DESCRIBED AS "BASICALLY MORE TO THE RIGHT THAN
I AM."

8. ROSA SAID HE HAS SEVERAL TIMES BAITED SOARES ON
THE POSSILIBITY OF A PS-PCP ALLIANCE AND HAS INVARIBLY

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RECEIVED VEHIMENT DENIALS. ROSA SAID THAT ANY SUCH TIES
WOULD COST THE SOCIALISTS MUCH PUBLIC SUPPORT.

9. COMMUNIST PARTY DYNAMICS: ROSA STATED HIS
CONVICTION THAT THE RECENT "LIBERALIZATION" F THE FRENCH
COMMUNIST PARTY WAS ONLY A TACTICAL MOVE, AND THAT ALL
COMMUNIST PARTIES HAVE ONLY ONE GOAL, POLITICAL POWER.
THE PCP LIKewise SHIFTED FACES DEPENDING UPON THE SITUATION.
ALVARO CUNHAL WAS THE SPOKESMAN WHEN THE PARTY WAS
DOMINANT AND WISHED TO PRESENT A HARD FRONT. OCTAVIO
PATO COMES FORWARD WHEN THE PCP WISHES TO APPEAR REASON-
ABLE AND KEEP ONE FOOT IN GOVERNMENT. SERGIO VILARIGUES
IS PROMINENT WHEN THE PARTY WISHES TO PLAY UPON ITS
MARTYR COMPLEX, GOING INTO CLANDESTINITY NOT TO KILL BUT
TO SUFFER. JOSE SERRA IS THE PARTY'S HIT MAN, READY FOR
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THE SHADOWY DEALS.

10. COMMENT: DURING PAST YEAR OF RELATIVELY REGULAR
CONTACT LABATT HAS SEEN ROSA'S POLITICAL POSITION EVOLVE
FROM SOMETHING AKIN TO THE LEFT-WING SOCIALISTS TO SOME-
PLACE BETWEEN THE PS AND THE PPD. HE IS NOW CAREFULLY
KEEPING HIS FENCES MENDED WITH BOTH OF THESE PARTIES.
FORMERLY ROSA THOUGHT PORTUGAL COULD LEARN FROM THE
YUGOSLAV OR THE SWEDISH MODELS. HE NOW BELIEVES THAT
PORTUGAL WILL FOLLOW A PATTERN CLOSER TO FRANCE AND THE
FRG.
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